

PHOBOS

Medlemsblad for ARES – kun for medlemmer

Nr. 264, onsdag 14. juni 2000

Redaksjonelt

Årets største spillbegivenhet står nok en gang for døren – nå er det bare åtte dager igjen til **ARCON:2000** åpner dørene for en foss av ivrige gamere. **ARCON:2000** trenger (som vanlig) din innsats – uten den innsats som bortimot hundre frivillige legger ned, ville det ikke være mulig å arrangere en spillfestival som **ARCON:2000**. Så hvis du fremdeles ikke har bestemt deg for hva du skal gjøre for **ARCON:2000**, så er tiden nå inne til å melde deg – snakk bare med et av komitemedlemmene på kveldens møte, så ordner vi alt der og da.

**NÅ ER DET BARE 8
DAGER IGJEN TIL
ARCON:2000!**

EX CATHEDRA #165

(spalten til Johannes H. Berg, styremedlem i Ares, administrator for ARCON)

Det er fortsatt mye & travelte ARCON-arbeid som står i fokus for undertegnede spillmessige innsats: Det begynner å bli kort tid igjen, og om du nå har noen mer eller mindre gode ideer til oss, **må** du gi beskjed med det samme! Og i enda større grad er det nå viktig å få vite om du kan være spilleder, eller har spillsett som vi kan få låne. Husk at vi er helt avhengige av frivillig innsats under ARCON! Uten hjelp fra nettopp de som leser dette nyhetsbladet, blir det en mindre spennende kongress...

Samt ikke minst: Spillklubben vår trenger som før nevnt at noen faktisk kan gjøre litt for den under samme kongress: Stille opp & dele ut brosjyrer, svare på spørsmål etc. (selv om dette ikke behøver å skje i form av en formell *stand* eller tilsvarende; det holder lenge om man kan gå noen runder i lobbyen i pausene). Dersom vi klarer å få vervet noen få prosent av alle de fra Oslo & omland som kommer innom ARCON, vil det være **meget** gunstig for medlemsmassen vår.

Det ser for øyeblikket ikke ut til at ARCON skal sette noen nye medlemskapsrekorder, akkurat. Vi har færre forhåndsinnbetalinger enn på samme tid i fjor – og i det minste de to siste årene har det ikke kommet noe «rush» av etteranmeldte som kan gi noen forventning om at vi kan komme opp i det vi hadde håpet på (over 350 forhånd – hvilket ville være temmelig nøyaktig det samme som i fjor). Men selvsagt, også her kan frivillig innsats hjelpe oss mot målet, som er å komme over de ca 700 som dukket opp til sammen i fjor (ca. 650 betalende + de «vanlige» 7% gratispasasjerer: Komitéen, standsbemanninger, «heltids» arrangører og personell, etc.

Det som er helt klart, er at vi som vanlig lider av en generell mangel på bemanning: Det er lenge siden vi overoppfylte gopherkvoten, bortsett fra i oppstarten torsdag kveld og frem til Pulje I starter på fredag: Da er det som regel bare så alt for mange som gjerne vil være med å gjøre et eller annet – de går gjerne i veien for hverandre! Det vi først

og fremst har behov for, er folk som kan jobbe lørdag + om natten. Men da vil selvsagt de fleste gjøre helt andre ting.

Ellers kan det nevnes at man ikke helt har glemt alle mulige andre former for aktiviteter i alt maset med spillfestivalen. Bølant annet skal en del «spilledere» fra Ares stille opp for å drive med brettspill på et internt Telenor-arrangement – en avdeling i statskapitalismens høyborg skal lære seg å «krige» på or'ntli... Og det blir også lagt opp til et Spillforum rett etter ARCON: Merk at det er en helg der undertegnede jobber, og selve Forumet kan derfor ikke begynne før om kvelden. Da slipper man på den annen side å konkurrere med vennelig vær som frister folk ut til skog & mark & badeplasser.

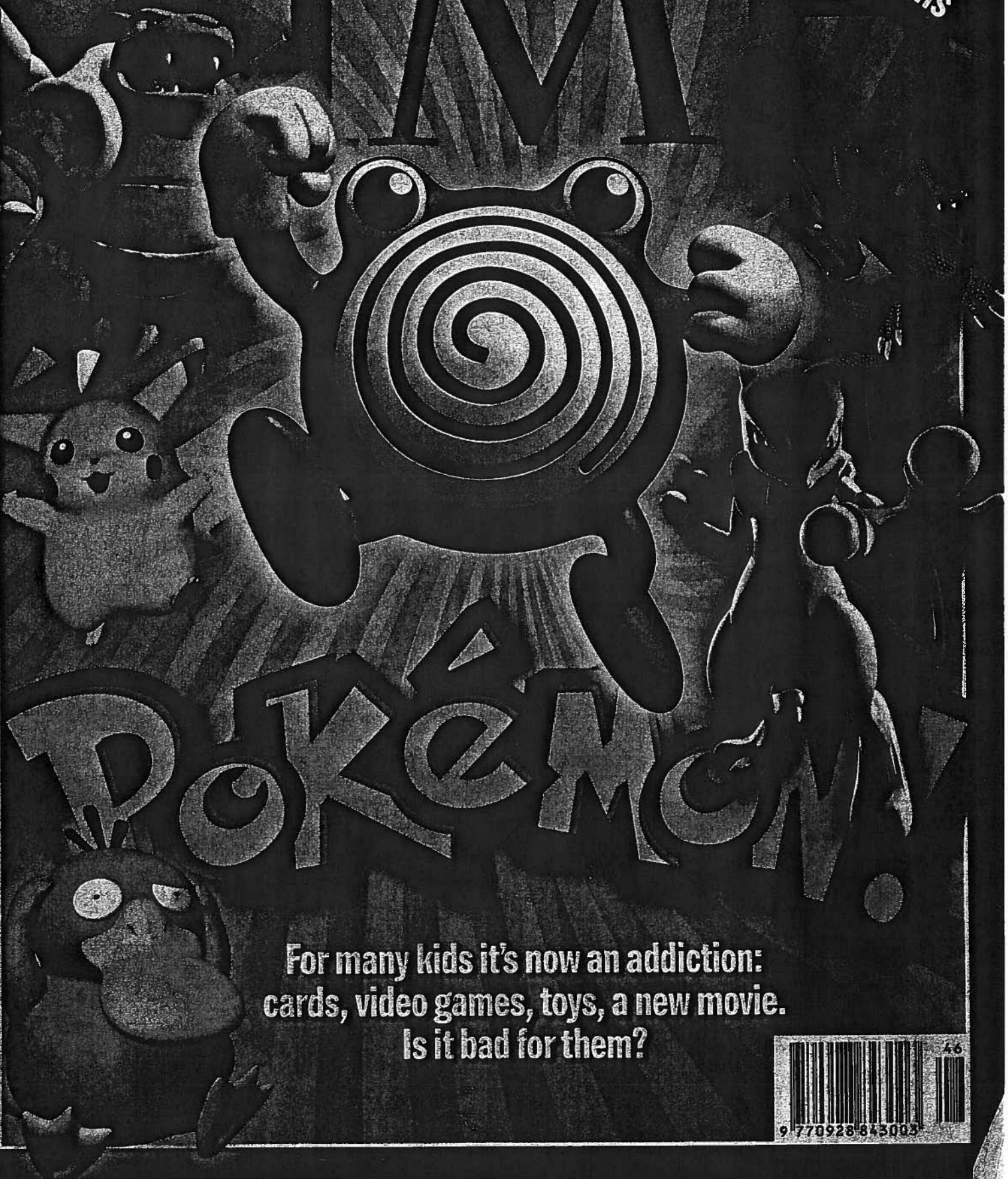
Det som er virkelig spennende med aktiviteten vår fremover, er at det later til å bli mer og mer av at folk faktisk får høre om spillene våre, eller tilsvarende ting. Kanskje har ikke boom'en innen dataspill bare vært til skade likevel? Og kanskje kan dette etter hvert også medføre større oppslutning om aktiviteter som klubbkvelder, rollespillkampanjer – og ARCON?

Johannes H. Berg

OSLO SPILL-FORUM 2/7

Neste gang blir denne sammenkomsten hjemme hos Johannes H. Berg (Tuengen Allé 10) fra kl. 1800 (NB: senere enn normalt fordi jeg jobber denne dagen!) søndag 2. juli. Går alt som det skal, vil dette dessuten bli ARCONS 1. Gopherparty for sesongen 2000-2001. Ved siden av de nødvendige mengdene ARCON-feedback/småprat, vil de vanlige tingene komme til å foregå: sosialt samvær, spilling, strukturert prat om spill & fri konversasjon om andre ting, og kanskje en og annen mulighet til å se på relevant video eller lignende. Kontakt Johannes, dersom du er interessert i å komme!

Thrills and Spills



For many kids it's now an addiction:
cards, video games, toys, a new movie.
Is it bad for them?



FO

Can such cute critters be bad influences? How one misfit's request turned into a global bonanza

By HOWARD CHUA-EOAN and TIM LARIMER

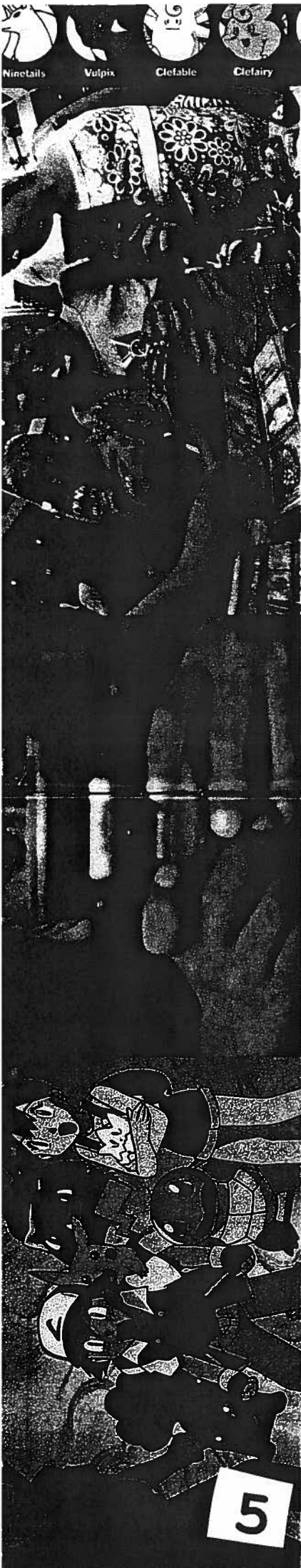
MONSTERS MAKE FOR DISQUIETING PLAYMATES. NO matter how toylike and frivolous they may appear, monsters are unnatural, and in the end, deal in unresolved fear. But monsters also have a way with children. Consider the suspicious charms of the Pokémon creatures—Gengar, Cubone and Chansey, for example. The first is a ghostly purple ball with a devilishly cute smile, horns to match and a head—or is the whole thing its actual head? The third is a vaguely dinosaurish pinkish cloud. Their equally bizarre companions range in height from 30 cm (that would be a Pidgey) to 8.5 m (that's an Onix) and in weight from 900 g (Diglett) to 868 kg (Snorlax). Their fighting skills are as ferocious as their names, and their skulls are as feral as ramming (that's Rhydon), as yucky as a tongue wrap (Lickitung—ugh!) or as childish as a tantrum (Primeape). There are more than 150 Pokémon species, and almost any child of 13 or younger, wired with a child's propensity for order, can recite a substantial lineup, complete with arcane attributes and an individual monster's ability to evolve into higher forms. Welcome to the new Mesozoic. The check-out line forms to the far right.

Parents who have had to suffer through the games, the TV series and shopping trips can take some comfort in the fact that the Pokémon demographic is the same one that has abandoned Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Power Rangers. What may be harder to survive is the relentlessness of Pokémonmania, a multimedia and interactive barrage like no other before it, with children mesmerized into cataloging



Bulbasaur Ivysaur Venusaur

Illustration for TIME by David Cowles



5

REVIEW

The Man Who Just Didn't Get It

A movie critic is no more likely to ask for mercy than he is to dish it out. And his first rule for never please ignorance. But this time a confusion and a request are in order.

Know this, Pokémoners: your world is about to change. I have never so much as held a Game Boy—though in my role as critic, I have held boys who were playing the game. I don't know the Pokémon boys, cards or comic books. I once watched 10 minutes of the Pokémon TV show, and that particular episode must have been the middle to the one that revealed sadness in 700 Japanese kids. It put me near to sleep. So in I describe my conversation with Pokémon: The First Movie, the gentle in your darkness. Sometimes the young have to enlighten their elders.

I was ready to return the favor as I watched Pokémon's Vending, a harmless, safely innocuous short cartoon that precedes the feature. The plot, eventually, is about the criminal effort to put a dragon's head out of a druggist. But the film contains before, as the whole gang cards—heads rolling, bodies writhing—in a cheery Dadaist war-torn world that echoes Bob Clampett's 1938 Looney Tunes triumph, *Porky in Wackyland*.

That comes the feature, and charm is replaced by the old treatment of a way-too-familiar scenario. As in the James Bond film *The Man with the Golden Gun*, an evil genius leads it over a mountainous island populated by a supercomputer. The monster here is Mewtwo, a lithe clone or copycat of kindly Mew. And as in *Toy Story*, the old-fashioned boys (the film) have to teach the intellectual ones (the Two) a bit about human values.

Now if someone would instruct the filmmakers about cartoon values. This picture has a lot of visual wit and sophistication of movement. It has no pace, or even much of a plot. As a cartooner reviewer might say, "It's pretty, man."

Last conclusion: I'm an eager to pretend understanding of a lot but as my journalist. And I do like things like this: this summer I read of three Harry Potter books, about and unorthodox, to my wife. So I'm no geek. Mewtwo. I'm just a guy who loves good cartoons and, when he sees a bad one, gets a little...uh...UPSET.

—By Richard Corliss

products. "If you put a Pokémon license on menagerie of multiplicative monsters, with trading cards linked to electronic games linked to television shows linked to toys linked to websites linked to cult-copyright linked back to where you started—a presidential Ponzi scheme. Pokémon: The First Movie opened in North America last week; the box office takes for the first two days was \$25 million in the U.S. alone. Bill Bright, the Australian group buyer for Toy Kingdom says his stores are finding it impossible to meet the demand for Pokémon

The four-to-12-year-old set can exhibit the most troubling fanaticism

about Pokémon. Children have written half e-mail to movie critics who have panned the film. After a screening and being mesmerized by Pokémon battle after Pokémon battle, an excited little boy told his father, "That movie makes me want to fight." Not words parents want to hear.

The Pokémon trading-card craze is at the center of much of the controversy. Colm McNallais, 11, of New York City is a good guide to frenzy. Passing kids looking to trade, he says, "We don't want them. They cheat." He gravitates toward others who have brought out binders filled with hundreds of cards. A dangerous thing, he says. Some of the stuff is rare, and who knows what other kids will do to get it. Colm has only the cards he is willing to trade. "Hey, you have a Magnemite!" someone squeals. "Oh, I need that Drowzee," says someone else. "Look at these holographic ones." The presence of a elusive Dragonite provokes gasps.

Some behavior has been delinquent. A six-year-old begged on to a Pokémon website and printed out counterfeit copies of the cards to trade with glibble schoolmates. Other behavior can be criminal. Last week a nine-year-old boy on New York's Long Island stabbed an older schoolmate in a dispute over cards. Last month, a similar incident occurred in Laval, Quebec. A principal explained why her school, like many others, was banning Pokémon cards: "Children who don't have Pokémon cards feel left out. When children bring the Pokémon cards into the lunchroom, they af-

fect the lunchroom, they af-

ten spend time looking at the cards instead of eating lunch. A group of parents in New Jersey has sued the trading-card manufacturer for intentionally making some cards scarce to force children into buying more and more packs of Pokémon cards. "Rucksteering!" the parents cry.

It's not really the violence that scares parents—they've lived with and tolerated intimations of horror for generations. In Grimm's fairy tales, what does the wolf do to Red Riding Hood's granny or the witch plan to do to Hansel? When kids collect dinosaurs, parents, blinded by science, simply shrug when their children yell in the museum. "Look, mom, that allosaurus is eating the brachiosaur's baby!" After that, what can be objectionable about the too-cute-to-live Pokémon named Jigglypuff, a ball of fluff whose greatest power—not to be scoffed at—is a stupefying lullaby?

But there is a problem: the key principle of the Pokémon is acquisitiveness. The more Pokémon you have, the greater power you possess (the slogan is GOTTA

CATCH 'EM ALL). And never underestimate a child's ability to master the Pokémon's required to accumulate such power: the ease with which they slip into cunning and thuggery can stun a mergers-and-acquisitions lawyer. Growlups aren't ready for their little innocents to be so precociously cutthroat. Is Pokémon payback for our get-rich-quick era—with our offspring led away like lemmings by Pied Poké-Pipers of greed? Or is there something inherent in childhood that Pokémon simply reflects?

The answer may lie in the origins of the phenomenon. Despite the publicity gener-

GAME WHIRL: Brock, Ash, Misty and their Pokémon in a scene from the movie. Left: Julio DeGuzman, 8, in battle on his Game Boy; children trading cards in San Diego

ated by the trading cards, the heart of Pokémon is the handheld game. Start by picking up the palm-size Nintendo Game Boy, insert the proper cartridge and switch it on. Soon, a creature with a lightning-bolt tail bounces through an animated sequence, pops a cute grin and yelps, "Pika-chu!" You have met the most popular of the Pokémon, a creature-part cherub and part thunder god—that is the most famous mouse since Mickey and Mighty.

Seven-year-olds navigate unerringly through the minuscule screen that is the porthole to Pokémon, punching two tiny buttons and a cross-shaped cursor bar to find their way. It's a more difficult task for adults. But if you choose to play, you assume the role of a Pokémon trainer. Your goal is to travel the world collecting one of every Pokémon species. To acquire that collection, you need Pokémon to subdue

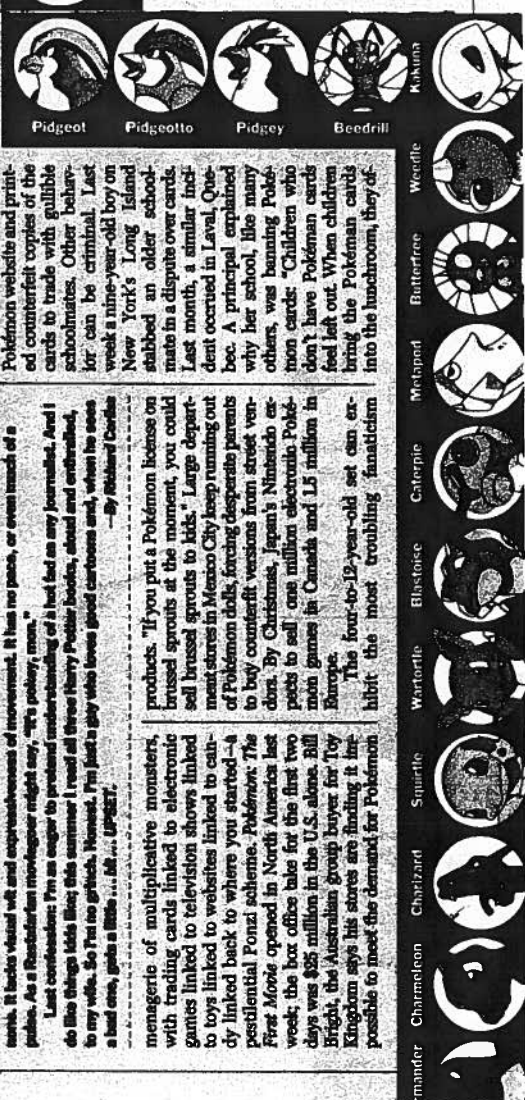
Pokémon (they are then stored in handy containers called Pokéballs, hence the etymology of Pokémon, short for Pocket Monsters). The battles are mediated by the electronics of the Game Boy. But don't worry: Pokémon do not die. When they lose battles, they faint. And if that happens to your Pokémon, you can take it to the local Pokémon Center, a high-tech spa where it can be restored to "fighting fit."

There are 151 Pokémon scattered among three existing versions of the game: Pokémon Red, Pokémon Blue and Pokémon Yellow. You have to trade between versions (via a cable linking Game

Boys) to complete the collection. Thus the quest for all Pokémon grows as the product line expands with new species. Pokémon Gold and Pokémon Silver will become available in the U.S. next year, with the promise of 260 species. There is a limit to the role playing. You cannot really choose your identity: you are a 10-year-old boy. You can pick any name when you assume the role of the child—your own, your friend's, your neighbor's. But one particular selection is volunteered: Ash, the name of the hero in the Pokémon TV series. He walks down from his room and, seeing his mother (a father is nowhere to be found), tells her he is departing on a quest. She replies, "Right. All boys leave home someday."

In Japan, where the Pokémon were born, Ash is called Satoshi; and Satoshi was made in the image

of his creator, Satoshi Tajiri, a young out-cast who, as a boy living just outside Tokyo, collected insects and other tiny creatures of field, pond and forest. In a nation of ultra-conformists, he was a misfit who didn't even dream of college. His father tried to get him a job as an electrical-utility repairman. He refused. No one expected him to go very far, even when he came up with the game after six trying years. But it is Tajiri's obsessions, more dysfunctional than Disneyesque, that are at the core of the Pokémon phenomenon. His monsters are a child's predilections. As the late, controversial child psychologist Bruno Bettel-





Jigglypuff



Wigglytuff



Zubat



Golbat



Oddish



Gloom

heim wrote, "The monster a child knows best and is most concerned with [is] the monster he feels or fears himself to be."

Now 34, Tajiri is an unimposing man, his face composed of sharp angles. His hands and lips tremble as he talks in a soft, shy voice. His eyes are bloodshot, dark circles ripple beneath them. He often works for 24 hours straight, then sleeps for 12. Tajiri is the kind of person the Japanese call *otaku*, those who shut themselves in with video games or comic books or some other kind of ultraspecialization, away from the rest of society. "They know the difference between the real and virtual worlds, but they would rather be in a virtual world," says Etienne Barral, a French journalist who spent years studying *otaku*. "They are always accumulating things. The more they have, the better they feel." Thus the first and central rule of Pokémon: accumulate.

As a boy, Tajiri accumulated insects, especially beetles. Even now, he tells TIME, he is proud of the way he captured beetles, looking under rocks to find them sleeping. "Nobody else thought to do that," he says. The son of a Nissan salesman and a housewife, Tajiri was raised in a Tokyo suburb in the late '60s, before

the city crept outward. "As a child, I wanted to be an entomologist. Insects fascinated me. Every new insect was a wonderful mystery. And as I searched for more, I would find more. If I put my hand in a river, I would get a crayfish. Put a stick underwater and make a hole, look for bubbles and there were more creatures." In Pokémon the pocket monsters—many in the shape of caterpillars, moths and crabs—can be found anywhere: tall grass, caves, forests, rivers.

Tajiri preserved the world of his childhood in Pokémon. In the late '70s, the rice fields gave way to shopping centers, and the ponds were paved over to make way for apartment buildings, highways and train lines. "A fish pond would become an arcade center," he says. Pokémon, he says, is a way for children of a new generation to have a chance to collect insects and other crea-

tures the way he did. For example, the Pokémon named Poliwhirl has a belly decorated with a little whirl—Tajiri's memory of the transparent skin of a tadpole with its coiled innards visible beneath. "Everything I did as a kid is kind of rolled into one thing," says Tajiri. "Pokémon."

Rolling together with his other passion: video games. Tajiri was raised on *Space Invaders* in the early days of the video-game revolution. He never went to college but studied electronics at a two-year technical school. He spent much of his time at arcades, perhaps the very ones that grew over the ponds of his childhood. "It was as sinful as shoplifting," Tajiri says. "My parents cried that I had become a delinquent." He was such a fanatic that one arcade gave him a *Space Invaders* machine to take home.

With a handful of fellow junkies (including his friend Ken Sugimori, who would eventually draw all the Pokémon), Tajiri began a magazine called *Game Freak* in 1982 to publicize tips and cheat codes of their favorite games. "Our conclusion was," he says, "there weren't too many good-quality games, so let's make our own." He took apart a Nintendo system to figure out how to make the games himself. Then, in 1991, he discovered Nintendo's Game Boy and its prize feature: a cable that could link any two Game Boys together. "I imagined an insect moving back and forth across the cable. That's what inspired me," Tajiri had hit upon the basic idea that would make the Pokémon a marketing wonder. Collecting would lead to trading between handhelds—and eventually between collectors of cards and plastic battle figures.

Tajiri signed a contract with Nintendo, which was impressed enough by his previous attempts at game programming to want to develop his latest idea. But he couldn't quite explain the concept to Nintendo, and the company couldn't

PSYCHOLOGY

Should Children Play with Monsters?

If you go by word origins, monster must demonstrate a moral, a lesson, a value. What values do the Pocket Monsters demonstrate? "Pokémon appeals to children's desire for mastery," says Stephanie Pratola, a child psychologist.

"That begins to develop at age six or seven. There are so many things to master—the games, knowing all the rules for the cards, what makes a good trade." It's a world of expertise in which kids can revel, free from parents who don't understand the rules. Pratola says the marketers have taken huge advantage of this developmental niche among children, but she spreads the blame around. "You have to look at it in the context of our culture. We are all obsessed with acquiring things, and we can't expect our children to rise above our culture." She adds, "Children will always grab onto fads, but parents are helping to feed this artificial economy." Parents often feel the only thing they can do is buy what their children crave. Says Pratola: "I remind them there are kids who don't have any Pokémon and are just fine."

Most psychologists see Pokémon as relatively harmless but warn of a need to be wary. A child who spends too much time on video games may not disengage from a simulated world and thus may be confused in the real one. And while card trading teaches social skills, it may also lead to obsessive behavior. "You don't know whether there's a valuable card in a pack when you buy it," says Maressa Hecht Orzack, founder of the Computer Addiction Service at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass. Children under eight aren't able to grasp this fact cognitively, which then leads to disappointment and an increased desire to buy more packs. Children overly anxious to please their peers are also at greater risk for addictive behavior. "Also make sure that your children are not being bullies while playing the card game," says Pratola. "Ask children about the trades they have made, and use this to teach them what it means to be fair and how to be a nice person."

—By Lisa McLaughlin

Vileplume



Paras



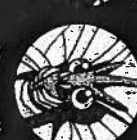
Parasect



Venonat



Venomoth



Diglett



Dugtrio



Meowth



Persian



Psyduck



Golduck



Mankey



Primeape



Growlithe





Gravel	
Geotextile	
Tentacle	
Tentacool	



During the six years it took Tajiri to finish Pokémon, *Gama Freak* nearly went broke. For several months, he barely had enough money to pay his employees. Five people quit when he told them how dire the financial conditions were. Tajiri didn't pay himself, but lived off his father. Perhaps the tensions were creative. Explaining his goal, Tajiri says,

However, by the time Tajiri was done with *Pokémon* in 1986, Game Boy technology was yesterday's news. "No magazine or TV show was interested. They thought Game Boy was finished," says Masakazu Kubo, executive producer of the publishing company Shogakukan Inc. "No takers were interested either."

But better graphics and more intricate games were going to be available on CD-ROM for use on home computers, leaving the tiny images on Game Boy in the dust. "When I finished *Pokémon*," says Tajiri, "I thought Nintendo would reject it. I was

The Pikachu crisis stirred a huge amount of attention and publicity, but the wrong kind. At that time, Tajiri's *GameFreak* and Kubo's publishing company were negotiating with skeptical executives at Nintendo America about introducing Pokémon to the U.S. CARTOON MONSTER ATTACKS KIDS was the first headline Americans read about Pokémon. It was not a good omen. There were others, however.

concern that the role-playing nature of the game would be a bad sell for us." The negotiations were not easy," says Kubo, who calls Tilden "the Dragon Mother of Nintendo." He explains, "She is a mother, and at first she didn't understand when we said Pokémon was good for children. In the end, though, it was good for us and that a mother was in charge."

Tilden says the seizures caused by the show concerned her, but "we knew it was isolated to that one episode." She adds, "It did not deter us from being excited. We were committed to taking a run at it."

Thus in the U.S., Nintendo read all the Pokémon pieces to play with—a fully extended product line of games, toys, comic books and cards to appeal to boys and girls from ages 3 to 15. Says Tilden: “We decided to make an all-out effort to repeat the phenomenon in the Western world.” An additional part of the strategy, says Tilden, was to hide its “Japan-

Antarctic	Geologic	Gravel
-----------	----------	--------

In Asia, fathers and grandfathers still tell of growing up in the midst of World War II, of sneaking out at night to catch crickets, and of growing up not knowing what to do with your catch except sneak into the tall grass of the countryside to catch crickets, then take them home, caged in your hand, to raise in the dark of matchboxes, training the insects for fights with the crickets of other boys who have been on the same nocturnal hunt. The more experience each cricket has had, the better a fighter it becomes—the tiny surrogate for the boy unable to fight in the war going on all around him. Pokémon is that kind of game. Except that there are many kinds of crickets, and all are potentially friendly monsters with fabulous powers. And nobody dies. —With reporting by Les McLaughlin/New York and Sachiko Sawai/and Tokyo

POKÉMON™

TURNERING PÅ ARCON!

Lørdag 24. juni kommer **ARCON** til å arrangere turnering i samlekortspillet **Pokémon** i Sophus Bugges hus på Blindern.

ARCON er Norges største spillarrangement, og foregår i år i helgen 23. - 25. juni. Festivalen avholdes i Universitetets lokaler på Blindern. Vi har i år reservert en egen bygning for årets store landeplage: Pokémon. Dermed kan vi tilby en ekstra gunstig pris for de som bare kommer for å spille Pokémon: Halv pris på vanlig dagsmedlemsskap, eller en tredel av prisen for å forhåndspåmelde seg til **ARCON**. (Vi er ikke barnevakter, men foreldre kommer inn gratis hvis de ikke skal være med og spille.)

www.fandom.no/arcon

MEDLEMSKAP I ARCON TIL

1/2 PRIS!

For deg som kommer på **ARCON** kun for å spille Pokémon.



Veibeskrivelse:

Ta T-banen (ikke buss!) til Blindern stasjon. Gå opp forbi 7-eleven, og opp bakken. På toppen tar du til venstre. Fortsett rett frem når veien svinger, så er Sophus Bugge den første bygningen på høyre hånd.

KUN 75,00 KR.



ARCON:2000